

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 7243

EXDIS

MILITARY ADDRESSES TREAT AS SPECAT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: IS, LE

SUBJECT: IDF ROLE IN LEBANON

REF: (A) BEIRUT 8053; (B) JERUSALEM 1442

1. IN VIEW OF RECENT REPORTING FROM ADJACENT POSTS AND PRESS INTEREST IN ALLEGED ISRAELI ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH LEBANON DEFENSE ATTACHE DISCUSSED QUESTION WITH THE IDF IN EFFORT ASCERTAIN FACTS.

2. IN MEETING WITH IDF INTELLIGENCE, DATT REFERRED TO MEDIA REPORTS ON ISRAELI ACTIVITIES, PRINCIPALLY BBC ELKINS BROADCAST FROM JERUSALEM WHICH MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: SIX TO TEN SHERMAN TANKS IN LEBANON; CHRISTIAN LEBANESE BEING TRAINED IN ISRAEL AND ADVISED BY ISRAELI OFFICERS IN LEBANON; EXISTENCE OF DIRECT TELEPHONE LINES BETWEEN THE IDF AND LEBANESE CHRISTIANS; THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS RECEIVING ARTILLERY SUPPORT ACROSS THE BORDER FROM IDF POSITIONS IN ISRAEL.

3. COL. MEIR, CHIEF OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS, IDF INTELLIGENCE TOLD THE DATT THAT:

A. THE ISRAELIS HAVE NOT TRANSFERRED ANY SHERMAN TANKS TO THE LEBANESE, THAT B. IN GENERAL, BEFORE SENDING AMERICAN ARMS TO OTHERS WE WILL CONSULT WITH THE UNITED STATES, AND C., IF MORE INFORMATION IS DESIRED, AN APPROACH SHOULD BE MADE

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THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

4. LATER THE SAME DAY THE DATT WAS SUMMONED URGENTLY TO MEET WITH BRIG. GEN. SAGI, ACTING DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, WHO STATED THAT THE EARLIER STATEMENT BY COL. MEIR WAS "NOT RIGHT." READING FROM A PIECE OF PAPER IN HIS HAND, SAGI SAID THE FOLLOWING WAS THE CORRECT REPLY: A. ISRAEL DID NOT SUPPLY TO LEBANON ANY WEAPONS RECEIVED FROM THE UNITED STATES, AND B. FOR OTHER QUESTIONS, IF YOU WANT ANSWERS, PLEASE ADDRESS THEM AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL.

5. THE BBC LATER REPORTED IDF HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT DENYING THAT ISRAEL HAD PROVIDED SHERMAN TANKS TO THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS. THE IDF SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD US THAT IT HAD ISSUED NO SUCH STATEMENT OF DENIAL.

6. COMMENT: IDF BEHAVIOR REFLECTS ACUTE SENSITIVITY ON ISRAELI ACTIVITIES ALONG LEBANESE BORDER. SEEMS CLEAR FROM CORRECTED IDF STATEMENT TO DATT THAT BBC REPORT PLAUSIBLE IN MOST RESPECTS BUT MATERIAL SUPPLIED TO CHRISTIANS NOT REPEAT NOT SUPPLIED BY USG. ATTACHES WILL INTENSIFY OBSERVATION OF THE BORDER AREA AND THEIR COLLECTION ACTIVITIES BUT, UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED EMBASSY WILL MAKE NO FURTHER REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION EITHER IN MILITARY CHANNELS OR ON POLITICAL LEVEL.
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